The Wild Rose Sweeting

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By C. A. Stephens

AS a rule, apple trees that come up wild bear fruit that is either sour or else bitter sweet, hard and acrid. All such trees need to be budded, or grafted and cultivated to be of any value to man. It is only once in a million times that a really good apple comes up as natural fruit.

The value to the world of such a choice apple may be enormous. The Baldwin, for example, which first appears growing wild in a Massachusetts town, could hardly be reckoned today as worth less than $200,000,000. We can bud and graft and cultivate, but we cannot be sure of propagating a new apple.

The Wild Rose Sweeting was named by Miss Alice Linderman, a young lady from Philadelphia, who had come to our northern hill country in the vain hope of recovery from advanced lung disease. She named it from the wild rose tint on one cheek of the apple.

The tree was discovered by Willis Murch, a youthful neighbor, who kept the secret of it to himself as long as he could for his own benefit. He was sufficiently generous to give some of the apples to Miss Linderman, but he demanded a cent apiece from the rest of us. He even asked four cents apiece after the fame of the apples spread abroad.

The year after he discovered the tree Willis carried a bushel to the county fair, and began peddling them at a cent apiece. Nearly every one who bought an apple came back for more. Willis raised the price to three and four cents. Presently a gentleman who had bought two came back and took the last ten in the basket at $1.

This fact shows better than any description could what a really luscious apple it was. There was that in the flavor of it that impelled people to get more at any cost. The Wild Rose Sweeting more nearly resembled the Sweet Harvey than any other apple to which I can liken it.

The flavor was like that of the Sweet Harvey thrice refined, perhaps rather more like the August or Pear Sweeting, and it melted on the palate like a spoonful of ice cream.

It will not seem strange to those who know something of the "apple belt" of New England that apple trees, even good ones, should be discovered growing wild in back pastures and secluded openings in the woods.

Oxford County, Maine, abounds in wild apple trees. But looking about a little, the farmer there can readily pick up enough young trees growing wild to set an orchard. They spring up everywhere. For this is one of the world's natural apple regions. West, north and northeast of our neighborhood rose irregular, wooded hills; and extending back among them was a valley, down which ran a brook abounding in trout holes at the foot of ledges and large rocks.

At one time the land here was cleared, but being stony and rough, it had been used for pasture, and was partly overgrown with bushes. There were thousands of young wild apple trees here, scrubby, thorny, where cattle had browsed upon them.

We all went fishing in this brook, spring, summer and fall. Far up the valley, at a point where the brook flowed over a ledge, there was a well-known hole. Willis Murch was fishing there one afternoon in the latter part of August, when he saw a red squirrel carrying an apple in his mouth by the stem, and coming out from some thick young hemlocks that grew along the west bank of the brook. He was sitting so still that the squirrel ran close up to him; but when he suddenly thrust out his hand, the animal dropped the apple and scudded away with a shrill chicker!

The apple rolled close to Willis' feet, and he picked it up. Apples were common enough, but this one looked so good that he rubbed it on his sleeve and bit it. Then his eyes opened in surprise, for this was no sour cider apple, but far and away the best apple he had ever tasted.

"It must grow near here," he said to himself, looking curiously around. "That squirrel didn't bring it far. The stem is all fresh, too. He has just gnawed it off the tree."

Thereupon Willis began searching. He crept into the hemlocks on hands and knees. Presently he came upon several other gnawed apples; but even with this clue, he was half an hour finding the tree. There were four or five huge rocks back from the brook among the thick hemlocks. At last he crawled in past two of these that stood together and came upon the apple tree, in a little sheltered amphitheatre. It was at the foot of another large rock, twelve or fifteen feet high, shaded by the green hemlock boughs. A tiny spring oozed out at the foot of the rock; and here this apple tree had grown up, unwatched and undiscovered save by the squirrels and birds.

The tree was a thrifty one. The trunk had attained a diameter of six inches; and when Willis found it there were, he says, four or five bushels of those delicious Sweetings, now just beginning to ripen. Willis first ate all he desired, then took off his coat, made a bag of it, and shook down the ripest of the apples to carry home to his family and the neighboring boys and girls.

"Won't they smack their lips!" he said to himself. "Won't they be up here for more!"

But on the way he took second thought, and craft entered his heart. "I won't tell them where it is," he said to himself. "Let them hunt. They never will find it." For the place was a mile and a half or two miles from the nearest farm.

Willis as yet had not thought of selling the apples or making a profit from his discovery; the idea came into his mind later, after he found how fond every one was of them. But that night, when we asked Willis where this tree grew, he laughed and said darkly, "Oh, I know!"

Such secretiveness was deemed piggish, and was resented by every one. Several declared that they could and would find that tree and get every apple on it. Willis laughed and said, "Let me know when you do."

That was the beginning of the long search for "Willis Murch's good tree." First and last we spent hours, days and, altogether, weeks scouring the pastures, fields and clearings. We watched Willis constantly in the hope of tracking him.

One of our boy neighbors—not one of the best—named Alfred Bachelder, lay in wait for days together on a hill overlooking the Murch farm, expecting to see Willis set out for the tree. At one time Alfred and another boy, named Charles Cross, had thoughts of waylaying Willis and extorting the secret from him by threats of torture.

Willis steered clear of them, however, and remained close-mouthed. He had grown very crafty, and went to the tree by night only, or sometimes early on Sunday mornings, before other people were astir.

During the August moon of the second season after discovering the tree he brought home a bushel of the apples on three different occasions by night; and he now began canvassing among the farmers who had orchards to sell scions, to be delivered in May of the following spring. After eating the apples, not a few signed for them at fifty cents a graft.

It required a fair share of courage on the part of a boy of fifteen to go to the tree by night, for the distance from Willis' home was fully two miles; and at that times bears and lynxes frequented the "great pasture."

Willis afterward told the other boys that a bear came out in the path directly ahead of him one night, as he was hurrying home with a bushel of Wild Rose Sweetings on his shoulder. The creature sniffed, and Willis shouted to frighten it. He was on the point of throwing down his apples, to climb a tree in haste, when the bear shambled away.

Willis seems now to have had great designs of selling scions to orchardists and nurserymen over the whole country. Only a tiny twig three inches long is requisite for a scion for grafting into other trees. The Wild Rose Sweeting should produce thousands of such scions. Willis, who was a Yankee lad by ancestry, resolved to preserve the secret of the tree at all hazards. He appears to have had dreams of making a fortune from it.

Thus far no one had been able to find the tree, as much from nature's own precaution in hiding it as from Willis' craft. By the middle of September that autumn he had gathered most of the apples, when the same chance which had first led his steps to the tree revealed it to the eyes of his enemies.

For about that time Alfred Bachelder and Charles Cross's brother, Newman, went fishing up the brook, and in due course arrived at the trout hole where Willis had sat when he saw the squirrel. They crept up to the hole, baited and cast in together.

There were no bites immediately; but as they sat there they heard a red squirrel chirr! up among the thick hemlocks, and presently caught the sound of a low thud on the ground, soon followed by another and another.

"He's gnawing off apples," said Alfred. "There's an apple tree in there somewhere."

Then the two cronies glanced at each other, and the same thought occurred to both. "Who knows!" exclaimed Newman. "Who knows but what that may be the tree?"

They stopped fishing and began searching. They could still hear the squirrel in the apple tree, and the sounds guided them to the little dell among the rocks. There were a few apples remaining on the tree; and they no sooner saw them than they knew that Willis Murch's famous tree was found at last.

They were so greatly pleased that they hurrahed and whooped for joy. Then they secured what apples were left, ate all they wanted, and filled their pockets with the rest. No more fishing for them that day. They had found the famous tree, and now were intent on thinking how they could most humiliate Willis.

Neither of them knew of his scheme to sell scions; but it had long provoked their envy to see him peddling Wild Rose Sweetings at the fair for four cents apeice. They would find him now and thrust a pink-cheeked apple under his nose.

But that would not be half satisfaction enough. They wanted to cut him off from his tree forever, to put it out of his power ever to get another apple from it. Nothing less would appease the grudge they bore him.

And what those two malicious youths did was to take their jackknives and girdle that Wild Rose Sweeting tree close to the ground. They went clear round the tree, cutting away the bark into the sapwood; and not content with girdling it once, they went around it three times, in different places.

That done, they went home in great glee, thrust the apples in Willis' face and bade him look to his good tree.

"We have found your tree, old Cuffy!" they cried to him. "You never will get any more apples off that tree!"

Beyond doubt Willis was chagrined. He did not know that they had girdled the tree, but he thought it not worth while to go up there again that fall, since there were no more apples. Yet, even if Alfred and Newman had found it, and even if they got the apples next season, he supposed that he would still be able to cut scions from the tree. Late in March, directly after the sap started, he went up there with knife and saw to secure them.

Not till then did he discover that the tree had been cruelly girdled and that the spring sap had not flowed to the limbs. He cut a bundle of scions, some of which were afterward set as grafts, but none of them lived. The tree was killed. It never bore again.

Thus perished, untimely, the Wild Rose Sweeting. Ignorance and small malice robbed the world of an apple that might have given delight and benefit to millions of people for centuries to come. For although the apple farmer cannot originate a new apple, he can improve on those which nature originates, and spread them over the earth.—Youth's Companion.

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY.

The Busiest Place in the World is a Honey-Bee Hive.

It is all work and no play in the hive, till winter comes, and sleep falls on all. But on the first day of spring, which comes in February, sleep is thrown off and work begins again. Work, work, work is the order, all day and all night.

The queen sets the example by beginning to lay eggs—and this means that all must bestir themselves. First of all there must be a thorough spring cleaning of the hive, and all the passages must be swept, and all the poor bees who have died must be carried away.

Some of the bees are formed into a guard for the queen. Others begin to fan with their wings as fast as they can to keep the air moving. Others set to work to repair the old combs—they are the bees architects, builders and carvers. Some begin to prepare food and drink—they are the bee chemists.

All the bees have special duties, such as nursing baby bees, or keeping the house clean; and always there are sentinels at the door of the hive, to see that only the proper bees come in and out, and to make sure that no mice, snails, moths, ants or other foes enter to steal the honey.

And on bright, fine days foraging bees set out to visit all the flowers they can find near the hive—the wood anemones, the daffodils and the violets—to gather the liquid in the flowers that they can turn into honey, the flower dust, called pollen, that is stored away to feed the baby bees on, and a curious sticky stuff called propolis, taken from trees, that is used as cement in the hive.

When the days grow warmer, and summer begins, every bright morning thousands and thousands of foragers sally forth from the hive, one big troop to go to the clover fields, another troop to the mignonette beds, another to the lilac trees and so on, each troop visiting one particular kind of flower.

The liquid in the flowers is carried away by the bees in little sacs inside their bodies, and the pollen in the little baskets attached to their hind legs—but hardly any of it is for their own use. A bee can find all the food it wants in one or two flowers. Yet in an hour it visits two, or perhaps three hundred, flowers, so busily does it work for the sake of others.

The World's Leaders Powerful Physically

So far as known, the world's leaders have, generally speaking, been of powerful physique, and have also been men of simple tastes and abstemious lives. It has even been asserted that no man in this country has risen to eminence in either the medical or legal profession who has not at some time in his life worked with his hands.—Dr. Richard Cole Newton, in Medical Record.

Broad Headed Horses Most Easily Taught.

Broad headed horses are the cleverest. In cavalry regiments it has been noticed that horses with broad foreheads learn their drill more rapidly than do others.—London World.

THE WALRUS OR SEA HORSE

A Monster of the Deep With But Little Intelligence --- Their Difficulty in Getting About on Land---Principal Articles of Diet of the Huge Creatures---Their Strongly Developed Parental Instincts.

By FRANK T. BULLEN, F.R.G.S., Author of "The Cruise of the Cachalot."

FROM the sirenia to the walrus is one of the easiest steps, for Sea Witch, as Kipling calls the latter, is ugly and uncouth enough to be one of the very same family as the dugong, although in truth he is nothing of the sort. But at the outset I feel impelled to enter a stern protest against the gross libel upon that beautiful animal, the horse, perpetrated by calling the walrus a sea horse and the hippopotamus a river horse. What in the name of common sense have either of these most ungainly brutes in common with one of the most elegant and beautiful of all known animals? Not that I would rashly call any of the Creator's wonderful designs ugly—I do but speak after the manner of men. But there does appear to me to be such an utter lack of similarity in the conferring of titles such as the foregoing. Nor is the manatee any more like a cow, still there is not quite the same jar to our sensibilities in the comparison, since the cow is not what one would truthfully describe as graceful, either in outline or movement.

Perhaps of all land-walking animals, none, not even the Myrmecophagus, can compete with the walrus for clumsiness. He has a gigantic body, in the fullest grown adult about a ton in weight, and about as unsymmetrical as a leathern bag of oil or the body of a hippopotamus. It is covered with a tough, gnarled hide, scantily clothed with coarse, brown hair, very patchy; in fact, not at all unlike one of those old hair trunks we used to see occasionally. The forelegs are very short, and the hand-like feet are planted flat at almost right angles to the body, while the hind feet have practically no legs to them, being apparently just an ornamental appendage to the body of a lieu of a tail. Consequently, he who can watch the progress of a walrus over land or ice and not laugh must be quite devoid of humor or any sense thereof, for it is certainly one of the most droll-looking methods of progression imaginable. But, as Dr. Johnson is reported to have said of the dancing dog, the wonder is not that he should perform so strangely, but that he should perform at all. For the body in the adult will weigh nearly a ton, and the road over which the creature ordinarily travels is one of the most rugged or slippery imaginable, a floe with a surface like a mirror, or a mass of rough hummocks, where the ice has been broken up by the sea and coming together again has conglomerated and congealed in the most fantastic shapes.

CONFORMATION OF THE WALRUS.

At the upper extremity of this oblong mass of flesh is the head, ludicrously small as compared with the body. It looks almost as if the body had suddenly tapered to a slightly elongated point. And where one naturally looks for the brain, at the top of the skull, there is apparently no room for one, only a flat, solid-looking mass of bone. The skull, however, is abnormally powerful, as it need be, for depending from it at right angles are the characteristic tusks like a pair of pickaxes. With these the walrus, suddenly rising from the bottom, hooks on to an ice floe, and with an almost incredible exhibition of strength, hauls himself up out of the water and into the berth he has selected for his sunbath or doze. With the same tusks, too, he digs in the seabed for his food, which is principally shellfish, although he does not disdain the offal of a dead whale, or indeed anything of an animal nature, so long as it does not involve the chase of the object. Pusuit is not at all in the program of the walrus except under certain circumstances, to be alluded to presently. The stomach of a walrus that I once examined (caught on a floe in Bering Straits) looked like the contents of an oyster dregde just hauled up. Curious shellfish of many kinds, and in several cases alive; stones, sand, mud, shrimps, worms and other things; it was a queer collection. Yet it seemed, if such was his regular diet—and I have no reason to suppose that that it was not—to have suited the walrus very well indeed, for he was so fat that out of his wounds exuded almost as much oil as blood.

As might be supposed from the nature of its food, the walrus is a gentle and inoffensive creature. Here again a sense of extreme incongruity is aroused in one at the sight of a morse suddenly popping up from under the sea. Its appearance is savage in the extreme—no painted Indian ever succeeded in making himself look more terror-striking than the walrus, and his bristling whiskers, each hair almost as thick as a porcupine quill and completely hiding the setting of the tusks, serve excellently to heighten his appearance of ferocity. Yet, generally speaking, at the sight of man he will flee as fast as he can, with every appearance of earnest desire to get away. The exceptions to this rule are found during the breeding season, among both males and females, the former in defense of the latter, and the latter in defense of their young. And as they are very sociable creatures, liking to herd in hundreds, an attacking boat may suddenly find itself surrounded by a herd of infuriated walrus, each armed with formidable weapons before noted. Contrary to the expectation aroused by its appearance, the walrus has a large and fully developed brain, although not especially notable for intelligence. But then the study of the brain is so far from being well advanced that we do not yet know why the elephant with its comparatively insignificant brain should be so much more intelligent than the ox one-eighth of the elephant's bulk, and with a brain almost as large. Or why the sperm whale should be so intelligent with a brain about the same size as the ox and a body one hundred times larger. Perhaps in the latter instance there is a distribution of brain at points along the spinal column so that messages from the outlying parts of the body should not have so far to travel. I do not here try to be funny, but only state what has been seriously suggested by naturalists.

THEIR STRONG PARENTAL INSTINCT.

In one respect, at any rate, the walrus is the equal of any of the higher intelligences. That is in the parental quality. No animal cares for its offspring so long or more lovingly. No animal will willingly undergo more suffering and privation for the sake of its young. There can be no doubt that the female walrus suckles its young and provides other food for it as well during the latter part of the period, for two years. This has been, I think, abundantly proved by observation, and, moreover, the great canine teeth which develop into the formidable tusks characteristic of this animal, do not show more than an inch or two until it is two years old. But the mother never seems to weary of her huge burden, the baby, if it be a male, often reaching its mother's proportions before it is weaned. With infinite, devoted patience she cares for it, watches over it, defends it with her own body, and, one is tempted to say, loves her burden so much that she is grieved when she must lay it down. However that may be, it is certain that the walrus for all their uncouth appearance and extraordinary method of living (so totally different from all other sea mammals whatever) enjoy their lives to the full in the best sense of the term. In one respect, indeed, they are extremely fortunate; with the exception of man they have no enemies.

The great Polar bear does not lightly engage in combat with "Awuk," since he knows that in those formidable tusks he has opposing weapons that are quite a match for even his tremendous claws and teeth, while the hide of the walrus is so thick and tough as to be almost impenetrable to even the onslaught of the great white terror of the Arctic seas. Consequently, the walrus lives a fairly peaceful life among his fellows. He does not prey upon them, and nature has so equipped him that they cannot prey upon him. But man has wrought terrible havoc among the walrus. Even as far back as 1327 it is recorded in a receipt presented at Bergen that the Greenlanders paid their tribute to the Crusades in walrus tusks. And all along the Labrador coast as well as the Gulf of St. Lawrence, where a walrus now would be almost as great a curiosity as a seal on the English coast, they were a century ago so numerous that hundreds were slaughtered in a day. Various causes have, however, reduced the hunting of the walrus to an insignficant matter confined chiefly to the Eskimos, who are fairly entitled to the produce of their hunting, since they are sportsmen in the best sense of the term. They do not kill for the sake of killing, but for their very life, and the walrus is one of their chosen objects of the chase for his succulence (from an Eskimo standpoint), from his lack of speed, and from his love of shallow waters, where he finds the humble mollusks upon which he feeds. Such gaps as the Eskimos make in the ranks of the walrus will do no more than preserve the natural balance necessary. If only civilized man will let the walrus alone, having found that the hunting does not pay, there will soon be as many as ever there were to people, if not exactly to beautify, the lonely Arctic regions.—New York Post.

To Irrigate Colorado.

A new irrigating canal being built on Williams Fork, near Hot Sulphur Springs, Colo., will be twenty miles in length. It will bring under water about 10,000 acres of land which is now worthless, being merely a sagebrush flat.